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ABSTRACT

Recognizing the need to support the work of educators and others in evaluating the quality of early childhood programs, this toolkit provides a framework for continuous program improvement based on a 6-phase planning process focused on assessing children's progress and on analyzing the quality of teaching and organizational effectiveness. The guide and related materials can be used with programs for children from birth to five years, including kindergarten, and was designed specifically to assist early childhood programs in preparing for or renewing their accreditation. Following an introduction and information on infant and early childhood program accreditation prerequisites, the kit is organized according to the planning process: (1) "Developing the Profile," detailing the process to develop a comprehensive profile of the children, families, and community served, including collecting and managing data; (2) "Defining the Shared Beliefs and Mission," assisting staff in articulating their beliefs and guiding the development of a mission statement; (3) "Documenting Children's Progress," guiding identification of children's current growth and learning as well as goals for future development, including developmental milestones charts; (4) "Analyzing Teaching and Organizational Effectiveness," helping staff assess the quality of their work by reviewing indicators of high performing systems of teaching and learning, and determining the extent to which these practices are evident; (5) "Developing the Action Plan," presenting a process to determine target school improvement goals, design program improvement initiatives, estimate the time and resources required, and identify those responsible for implementing the plan; and (6) "Implementing the Plan and Documenting Results," helping staff monitor plan implementation, collect evidence of goal achievement, and sustain commitment. Each part includes planning resources, focus questions, self-assessment checklists, and a sample report. The kit's nine appendices include support materials, a glossary of relevant terms, performance standards guidelines, program evaluation standards, and a 140-item bibliography. (KB)

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